

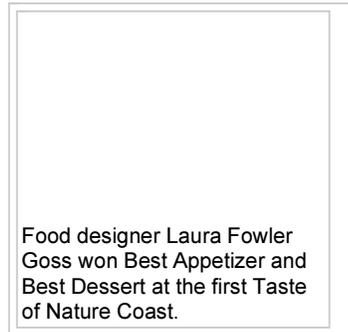


## Taste of the Nature Coast raises funds for Resource Center

By Sean Arnold

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The first-ever Taste of the Nature Coast fundraiser hosted by Tri-County Community Resources combined good food for a good cause with a strong dose of community spirit.



Food designer Laura Fowler Goss won Best Appetizer and Best Dessert at the first Taste of Nature Coast.

Diana Child, chair of Tri-County Community Resources, who led the organization of the event, called the event a success, with hopes of expanding the event in the future. It was held at the Haven Hospice Community Building in Chiefland.

All proceeds go toward the Tri-County Community Resource Center in Chiefland. The food and prizes were donated at no costs.

Six Tri-County food vendors competed for the Taste of Nature Coast's Best Appetizer, Best Main Course and Best Dessert, as voted by attendees.

The attendees also scored various donated drawing prizes.

Chef Laura Fowler Goss, Branford food designer, collected the Dessert and Appetizer awards, while Cedar Key's 83° West won for Best Main Course for its Shrimp and Grits dish. The Appetizer competition was particularly tight; Goss shared her trophy with second-place finisher Bell's Catering,

of Chiefland.

There were six participants in all, including Chiefland's The Gathering Table, Cross City's Three Guys Delight and Cross City Nursing and Rehabilitation. Tri-County Metals, of Trenton, was the event's major sponsor.

"Everything was delicious," Child said. "I wish we had prizes for all of them. It was really sweet of Laura to give it to the second-place appetizer.

"The volunteers really pulled this together. Without them, it would have been mission impossible. I'm hoping we'll be able to do it again next year with more restaurants and more people attending. Although, we pretty much filled the room."

Tri-County Community Resources, Inc. (TCCR) began in 2013 through a grassroots network led by local churches seeking to combine and organize their knowledge of resources for those in need.

"When I first started at the First United Methodist Church, I couldn't figure out where to send people for resources," Child said. "We were getting on average 100 people a week in my office, asking for help with utilities, etc. I thought, 'There's more going on here,' so I would start talking to them and, for example, one guy was having a hard time keeping a job because he was color blind. I found out through another church about a program out there that helps those with disabilities like that get jobs, so I thought, if all of these churches know all these resources, why don't we talk to each other."

TCCR collaborated with Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) in establishing the Tri-County Community Resource Center in 2015, further consolidating the network's efforts. The Center is managed through PSF by Beverly Goodman. PSF is in charge of programming for the Center and helps keep it sustainable. It's located at 15 N. Main St., neighboring the Chiefland Police Department.

It's the fourth such center established by Partnership for Strong Families, and the first outside of Alachua County.

"Tri-County Community Resources is the advisory council that basically had the idea for (the TCCRC) and basically started the process of opening the Resource Center, along with community partners, local residents, and Partnership for Strong Families," Goodman said. "Everybody plays a part in keeping the Resource Center open. The Partnership for Strong Families donates me to manage the Center, sort of like the City of Chiefland donates the building to house us."

As an example of the work done by the Center, Child recounted a local woman who used the Center's resources to improve her English speaking, eventually enabling her to get a full-time job at Shands Hospital in Gainesville.

"The Resource Center does not pay any bills," Child clarified. "What they do is match the client with what's available in resources. And they dial things down further: Why are they in this situation? Has there been a loss of job? If so, can we help get you signed up with the One-Stop Career Center? Do you need to use our computers to create resumes?"

Child also said the the Resource Center has helped prevent clients from abusing local churches' assistance with utilities bills. She hopes some of the funding from the Taste of Nature Coast can help the Center provide financial literacy courses.

"We're so proud of the community support that's come in for the Tri-County Community Resource Center," said Patricia Carroll, director of community relations for Partnership for Strong Families. "We know that Center is only as strong as the community that supports it, and this night really showed how much people are behind the center."